

15 December 1958

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CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE

BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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USSR: The Soviet statement of 13 December about the forthcoming NATO council meeting, like similar messages prior to the NATO heads of government meeting last December, is aimed at impeding Western defense plans and disrupting Western unity. Moscow is seeking to undermine public support for NATO in all member countries by repeating long-standing proposals for easing tension and renewing warnings of Soviet retaliation against American missile bases in NATO countries. The statement made no new proposals on Berlin or on East-West negotiations.

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USSR-Iraq: A Soviet ship, believed to be the Pskov, arrived at the Iraqi port of Basra on the night of 11 December with the second consignment of arms to be delivered under the Iraqi arms deal with the Soviet Union. Materiel already unloaded from the Pskov includes antiaircraft and field artillery pieces and vehicles. The first shipload of Soviet arms arrived at Basra on 19 November.

II. ASIA-AFRICA

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ok

Jordan: Prime Minister Rifai has prepared a bill which would place full control of the armed forces in the hands of the defense minister, a post also held by Rifai. This proposed action is aimed at curtailing the power of the potent Bani Sakhir Bedouin faction and other anti-Rifai elements. Rifai expects that Jordan's tractable legislature will approve the bill this week. His proposal may set off another round of bitter internal maneuvering and increase factionalism in the army.

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ok

Algeria: Algerian rebel leaders, having failed to gain UN General Assembly support in their effort to induce France to negotiate with them, now are threatening to procure large amounts of arms from the Sino-Soviet bloc. Rebel Premier Ferhat Abbas told an off-the-record news conference that he had exhausted his patience with "moderate" approaches and indicated he would try to begin recruiting fighters from other parts of Africa.

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All-African Peoples' Conference: The conference in Accra which ended on 13 December passed three relatively moderate resolutions despite vigorous UAR and pro-Communist efforts to control it. However, UAR-led extremists succeeded in having a statement included which endorsed use of violence to free "subjugated and exploited" territories where "democratic principles

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do not prevail." Although location of the conference's permanent organization in Accra is a victory for moderate African elements led by Ghana's Prime Minister Nkrumah, he says that he is disappointed with the outcome of the meeting.

OK

Finland: President Kekkonen, in his 10 December radio speech reviewing the current strained relations between Finland and the USSR, appears to have gone dangerously far toward giving Moscow a free hand in influencing developments in Finland. This increases the possibility of ultimate Communist participation in the government. Finnish independence may be further undermined over the next few months as a result of continuing Soviet pressure.

OK

The Netherlands: The Netherlands will probably be without an effective government for at least several months as a result of the 12 December resignation of the Labor party from the governing coalition. Although all parties are generally agreed on basic pro-Western foreign policy, the resignation will end a 1956 agreement among political parties to maintain a high level of defense spending.

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Jordanian Premier Seeking to Gain Control of Army

Premier Rifai has prepared a bill to reorganize the Jordanian Army which he expects will be passed by Jordan's tractable legislature during the coming week. The bill would place virtually absolute control over the armed forces in the hands of the defense minister, a post concurrently held by Rifai, and place Rifai's protégé, Deputy Chief of Staff Sadiq Shara, in direct operational control of army units as the new chief of staff. With this measure, together with the recent "abolition" of martial law, Rifai seeks to curtail the power of the potent Bani Sakhir Bedouin faction in the army which has supported the prime-ministerial ambitions of his rival, Court Minister Hazza Majalli. Under the proposed reorganization, the present army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Habis Majalli, a member of the Bani Sakhir tribe, would be elevated to a figurehead position.

The Bani Sakhir faction has formed the main source of King Husayn's support in the army; it controls the army's armored brigade, several infantry units, and tribal auxiliaries which it has trained and armed. The group's key role has increased the ambitions of its leaders, who are reported displeased that their power is destined to be reduced by the proposed reforms and by the recent lifting of martial law.

Rifai apparently feels confident that the King has no choice but to support him in attempts to curb the group which has been the chief prop of the monarchy. Implementation of the reforms is certain to increase factional rivalry in the army, thereby adding to instability in Jordan.

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Algerian Rebels May Intensify Search for Support in Wake of UN Defeat

The Algerian rebel leaders, having failed to gain UN General Assembly endorsement of independence for Algeria and support for their efforts to induce France to negotiate with them, now may seek to procure large amounts of Soviet bloc aid. Rebel leaders have frequently reiterated during the past four years that if they did not receive support from the West they would turn to the bloc. The dispatch of a three-man mission, including the rebels' minister for armament and supply, to Peiping early this month seems to have been designed to enlist Western support in the United Nations. Consequently the delegation may now press more urgently for arms aid. Any new supplies of arms, however, would still be countered by the increased effectiveness of French military measures.

Ferhat Abbas, premier of the rebels' provisional government in Cairo, told an off-the-record news conference that his government had reached the limit of its patience and that it now would seek active bloc support. He added that the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), which was represented at both the All-African Peoples' Conference at Accra and the Afro-Asian Economic Conference in Cairo, intends to mobilize African territories in support of Algeria's liberation. Abbas said the FLN would seek to recruit Mauretanians first and that the West "could be surprised" if "black Africans" are found fighting in Algeria. The Algerians, as feared by officials in both Morocco and Tunisia, are more likely to attempt to embroil those two recently independent North African states in an expanded conflict.

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Finnish President Yielding to Soviet Pressure

Finnish President Kekkonen, in his 10 December radio speech reviewing the current strained relations between Finland and the USSR, appears to have gone dangerously far toward giving Moscow a free hand in influencing developments in Finland, according to the American Embassy in Helsinki. He suggested Finland is in greater difficulties with the USSR than at any time since the war, but expressed disdain for "promised aid" based on political considerations from Western countries. Kekkonen maintained that Moscow had not interfered in Finland's internal affairs and placed the blame for the present situation almost entirely on the Finns.

The embassy is convinced that Finland's position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union has worsened and that there is a real possibility of a serious undermining of Finnish independence over the next several months. This will depend in large part on the way in which Moscow will seek to capitalize on the opportunities open to it and on the moves taken by the numerically predominant but virtually leaderless groups opposed to the President's course.

Meanwhile, negotiations to form a new government are continuing under the leadership of the chairman of the Agrarian party parliamentary group. Disagreement probably exists among the various parties regarding Communist participation, but most parties apparently remain opposed to such a move. The recent statement by a leading Communist party official that participation in the new government was "not important" suggests that neither Moscow nor the Finnish Communists intend to press for this as an immediate objective.

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Lengthy Government Crisis Seen in the Netherlands

The 12 December resignation of Prime Minister Willem Drees and the other Labor party ministers evidently means that the Netherlands will be without an effective government for several months. The powerful Catholic party is known to be opposed to formation of an interim government pending expiration of the parliamentary term in 1960; hence, a call for new elections early next year seems likely. Lengthy negotiations on a new government might then ensue--more than four months elapsed before the present coalition was put together after the 1956 elections.

The Labor party evidently deliberately provoked the present crisis, believing that its interests would best be served by risking early elections rather than waiting until 1960 when its position would perhaps be even weaker. However, friction within Drees' four-party coalition--Labor, Catholic, and two smaller Protestant parties--has been apparent for more than a year. There have been frequent charges from the Labor party that the other parties were not abiding by the government program agreed to in 1956, and friction has increased since last spring's local elections in which the Labor party lost votes and the opposition Liberals made gains.

The Netherlands' defense expenditures will probably not continue at their present high level. Under the 1956 government agreement, the present defense budget was to have been maintained until 1960, but criticism--primarily from the Labor party--that the Dutch defense effort exceeds that of other comparable NATO countries suggests that maintenance of this agreement will be difficult. Other major aspects of Dutch foreign policy will probably not be affected.

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